The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

PRICE TWOPENCE
3s. per annum post free

No. 170. AUGUST, 1921

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N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 16th of the month preceding publication.

Is it Peace?

This is the question which at the present time is being asked with eager persistency. While it is asked of affairs in general, it is with regard to Ireland that it is for us of prime importance. We look back upon terrible and trying months, when the worst horrors of warfare have been enacted in Ireland. Every day's news comprised records of murder aggravated by the most cold-blooded and callous cruelty. So accustomed had we become to the daily toll of valuable lives that now it seems passing strange to miss the tragic features of past days. The truce, with its cessation of outrage, is almost unreal. We can hardly believe it is anything but a brief interlude preparatory to greater trials and tragedies.

With the political aspects of the matter we are not here concerned. The adjustment of matters as between North and South is for others to consider What really concerns us is the religious and humanitarian aspect of the matter. Every feeling of humanity, to say nothing of every fundamental Christian principle, is outraged by such events as have occurrred in this unhappy land of ours. That professing followers of the Christ should inflict grievous injury upon each other, not when inflamed by passion, but as the sequel of cold-blooded calculation, offends every spiritual fibre of our being.

All the more ardently, then, do we hope that now when a new atmosphere has been created by the King's appeal, in the light of which past events can be seen in their true proportion, members of all parties will take counsel together in the interests of peace and good-will. It is useless and mistaken to try to apportion blame. Partisan zeal and party passion are not characteristic of any one section of the community. But a new situation is come in which these may be replaced by the larger view and the saner and more Christian attitude of mind and heart. We all surely wish to free our country of the reproach which has so sadly injured its fair fame in the eyes of the world. Now, as never before, the auspices seem favourable. May God so rule the hearts of men that peace and good-will may result, and the present deliberations prove the way to an abiding settlement. We, who stand aloof from the council chambers where these high matters are debated, not only stand and wait in hope and eager expectation, but fervently wish God-speed to every endeavour to bring order out of chaos. In the meantime, it behoves each one as so to fashion our lives that the spirit of the Christian Gospel may expel every meaner spirit and make mutual love and fellowship paramount.

Notes of the Month.

We are glad to learn that the vacancy to be created at the end of the present month by the resignation of the Rev. G. L. Phelps, of Holywood, is likely to be filled at an early date. Faced by the prospect of an interregnum, the Holywood people determined to make this as brief as possible and set about securing a suitable successor immediately. Having made their choice, we hope that nothing will prevent the securing of the minister on whom the lot fell. If he accepts, as we hope he may, the winter work will not have to be faced without a competent and experienced leader. [The Rev. E. Lockett, of Hastings, has now accepted the call, and hopes to begin his ministry before the end of October.]

* *

But before it becomes our duty to welcome the new we wish to discharge a duty to the old. Mr. Phelps has been for a number of years a very regular contributor to our columns, and we, as well as our readers, have appreciated his thoughtful articles. For all the help he has so consistently given we would express our grateful thanks and trust that even in England it may be possible to receive occasional reminders of Mr. Phelps's reading. We wish him every happiness and success in his new sphere of labour.

* *

It is gratifying to know that the North of Ireland is having an opportunity of hearing two American ministers who are visiting this country and Great Britain. The Rev. Ben Franklin Allen and the Rev. J. Mark are now employing their vacations strenuously and several of our pulpits in Belfast and further afield will be occupied by them in the immediate future. The first-named is to address the Laymen's League in the Central Hall on August 1st and we hope that, despite the holidays, he may have a good attendance.

Although it seems long since the Royal Visit to Belfast the good effects of it are with us still. Nothing at the time marred its happy fulfilment, and the royal visitors were greatly impressed by the heartiness of their welcome. The note struck by the King in his speech evoked a fitting response, and has resulted in the present practical attempt to promote peace. We trust and pray that the King's ardent hope may end in the desired sequel, and that with goodwill dominant in all hearts, mutual consideration and emulation in self-sacrifice may prove the basis of re-established order in our land. There could be no greater and more appropriate outcome of an occasion so happy and successful in itself, than that it should mark the inauguration of a new era of peace and prosperity. It is yet too soon to judge of results or even of possibilities, but we can all sympathise with, and seek to further, every earnest attempt to realise the King's heartfelt desires.

* *

Since our last monthly issue appeared members of our community have been granted well-deserved honours. Sir Samuel C. Davidson has to his credit a splendid record of practical service, and by his inventive abilities and indefatigable labour for many years contributed to the prosperity of his own business and the increased progress of the City of Belfast. We wish him many more years to enjoy his well-merited distinction. The fact that Mr. John M. Andrews was appointed Minister of Labour and a member of the Cabinet of the new Government was noted by no persons with more satisfaction than those belonging to his religious community. We hope that health and strength may be granted him sufficient for the increasing responsibilities of high office.

* *

The Business Agent, the Rev. G. J. Slipper, earnestly asks for the early payment of all outstanding accounts for the magazine. Some of these are now considerably over-due, and it would greatly facilitate the balancing of the accounts if prompt payment were the practice.

Human Responsibility To-day

[The Annual Lecture prepared by the Rev. W. G. Tyrrant, B.A., London, at the invitation of the General Synod. Owing to indisposition Mr. Tarrant was unable to be present, but kindly sent on his MS., and this was read on June 15 by the Rev. H. J. Rossington.]

Part II.

We are driven, therefore, at the last to seek security for the well-being of the community, alike on its material and its spiritual side, in a more constant emphasis on the fact that to be human is to be dutiful. No amount of ingenious philosophising can serve to argue away this indispensable element from the lives of men; no strictest audit of the whole evidence in each particular case, in the desire to avoid demanding more than the individual could really achieve, and certainly no defiance of ancient rule and convention, such as those utter from time to time who advocate the culture of the "Will-to-Power"—can rid us of this factor in our problem. Mere machines we are not; mere independent self-evolvers we cannot be. To become a man the individual must live among men, and in such life "discipline must be maintained." Neither for ourselves nor for others can we afford to accept indulgent or benevolent-seeming excuses. Rather, the wise man, in times like these when so many influences tend to increase the sense of irresponsible power in many persons (and especially in the rising generation) will have recourse to a tonic treatment that "seems cruel only to be kind."

With two reflections arising from the foregoing and appearing to have special importance for such people as ourselves let me bring to a conclusion this all-too-inadequate survey of one of the most vital subjects possible to be studied. In the first place, it seems inevitable to infer, in the light of the facts of human society as it has evolved, that a Moral Being has planned our nature and placed at its very centre this august principle, which is at once the mainstay of the whole fabric of human affairs, as human, and the source of noblest heroism and most splendid honour. Take this away, and what is there in this world to live for? Retain it, strengthen and enlighten it, and what problem of individual or communal life need daunt us? For with this "fear" in our hearts there need be no fear of anything around. It is an accountability in the last resort to God Himself, the giver of discernment of good and evil, and the supporter of all who choose the good, that underlies all degrees of responsibility to one another. No doubt an appeal can be made, not without fine results at times, to a sense of duty that goes no higher than a conception of that nobler community and State that we would wish our own to be. But when the City that commands our loyalty, and for which we rise with alacrity to yield our utmost, is to us none other than the "City of God," the whole endeavour takes on a new and glorious light; its prudences and thrifty plans assume a nobler livery, and we enter with joy a "service which is perfect freedom."

Professor L. P. Jacks, in his recent *Hibbert Lecture* on the "Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion," uttered a quickening call to Christians to arise and put on the beautiful garments of a Faith and Love that will always do more to emancipate the soul than any code of rules, however skilfully devised. It was a timely word, and by none needed more than by that "twenty-shillings-in-the-pound" Unitarian who pays his debts, to be sure—as far as he knows them!—but who somehow misses the tender beauties of a life lived humbly and yet happily with his God. So far as such a rebuke was needed by any of us we shall do well to be thankful for it, and seek to make such good amends in the future that strangers and the young may catch that gleam in our religion that shall lure them more and more to share it with us. At the same time, for the sake of all concerned, not least of ourselves, we shall do well still to pay the full "twenty shillings"—or at least try to—lest, as has hap-

pened in the case of some, we should suppose that the Lord of our Love is not also the Lord of our Will, the Light of our Conscience, and the Father of the Household where each son has duties to perform.

And, finally, even while we are considering these high topics in the quiet and dignity of brotherly fellowship, we have but to lift our minds to a survey of the immediately surrounding conditions to be chilled and shocked. The appalling miseries afflicting many people in many lands, none more tragically than ours, the vice and degradation, the greed and tyranny, the stupid ignorance and low pleasures that surround us, seem to cry out against our theologies and put all our philosophising to shame. To some minds, indeed, the spectacle is so entirely shocking as to destroy that basal conviction in God, as the ultimate Righteousness Supreme, and leave them at the best staggering alone in such decent and charitable usages as were the result in their forefathers of a reasoned faith. To remedy this paralysis —which if suffered to go unchecked will sooner or later prove fatal to manhood, let us once again rely on the innate convictions on which all our real progress depends, and to which appeal has always to be made by any external authority that seeks to mould our behaviour. With the ancient Hebrew we must at the last exclaim, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" With the ancient Greek, when disposed to regard the case of many as desperate, so bound as they are in the evil chains of circumstance, we may, or we may not, find relief in the conception of an earlier stage of existence where, being allowed full freedom to choose, such souls misused their opportunity, and must now work out the result; but, whether Plato's way of escape commends itself or not, we must take it as one more evidence of the ineradicable belief of the good man that there is goodness and justice at the heart of all existence, and that seeming chaos is but cosmos evolving. A noteworthy parallel comes also in that doctrine which Buddhism has long taught, and which many in our Western world have shown of late a readiness to accept. In declaring for the principle of *Karma* the Indian mind has at least added its testimony to this same root conviction—that man is essentially a responsible being, and that so great and inescapable is the entail of transgression that the taint adheres till successive lives have been spent in the progressive effort of expiation and purification.

If any superiority to the form in which this deep conviction is thus or elsewhere clothed can be claimed by the Christian's view of this life and its implications, such superiority can only increase that sense of responsibility in himself which remains the most important fact of his own life, and which seems the one hope for the deliverance of mankind from its stupendous load of sin and evil. If He whom Christians call their Master *must needs* in his day discharge the duties of a seeker and saver of the lost, how shall Christians—of any school or church—justify their claim to be his followers if they, in their turn, are not as faithful to the work which is set before them? The levity of Unitarians may or may not be greater than that of other religious people, but it is in some cases a sad commentary on their boasts of a superior type of thought, emancipated from the delusions of so many of the churches. There is no superstition so absurd as that which plumes itself on the number of things which it does not believe; there can be no greater delusion than to suppose that God has not something better for us to do than just to please ourselves and "have a good time." If the considerations which have been here submitted have any force, they should lead all who accept them to renewed efforts to intensify the feelings of duty, obligation, honour and loyalty in the minds of old and young; for in them are rooted all the best hopes of humankind.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(Founded by ROBERT SPEARS)

AND

UNITARIAN HERALD

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PUBLISHED AT

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Young People's Page.

"THE HILL DIFFICULTY."

Many young people still find pleasure' we hope, in the reading of John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." They may perhaps think of it as a book full of interest and the spirit of adventure long before they learn that it is one of the greatest of religious books ever written. We are here concerned with one part of it. Christian in the course of his adventurous journey sees other companions making for the same goal. They, like himself, do not find it easy to pursue the right path. This is how the writer describes one part of the way:

"I beheld then, that they all went on till they came to the foot of an Hill, at the bottom of which was a spring. There was also in the same place two other ways besides that which came straight from the gate; one turned to the left hand, and the other to the right, at the bottom of the Hill; but the narrow way lay right up the Hill, and the name of the going up the side of the Hill is called "Difficulty."

It is easy to see the meaning and the general application of these words. For all people, young and old, life is a pilgrimage which does not wholly lie along plain paths. At school, at home, in the world of active duties, there are obstacles to be encountered, hills to be climbed. There are persons who are ever inclined to complain when the way grows rough or goes up-hill. There are others who are never so delighted as when they see before them some steep height which requires effort and stern endurance. In a country like Switzerland, for example, there are travellers who continually go out of their way to climb the loftiest and most difficult mountains. These do not lie in the way of their duty at all. It is possible even in mountainous countries to pass by the most dangerous of routes and by valley paths or secure zig-zag roads travel safely through the length and breadth of the land. Such are, in fact, the main lines of intercourse by road or by rail. But adventurous and greatly daring visitors when they see before them some lofty snow-clad peak, the way to which demands endurance, courage and a clear head, feel drawn to the undertaking of the climb. Not infrequently they lose their lives in the endeavour, and then people who read of their fate comment on the folly which ran such unnecessary risks. Yet that is no fair or final comment. Only those who have been under similar conditions realise how strong is the appeal made by the rigour and hardship of the mountain country to some of the best qualities man possesses. The stern determination not to be defeated, the feeling that difficulties may and must be overcome, the real satisfaction with which one looks back at the end of the arduous journey and sees that one's bodily and mental powers proved equal to the hazardous test—all these things are known only to those who have breathed the invigorating air of the lofty heights of human endeavour.

Now, it is the same kind of quality of head and heart and hand which is necessary for the successful and the satisfactory pilgrim of human life. To shirk the strenuous path, to choose ever the easy and pleasant by-paths which evade all hardships and seek to escape every difficulty, is to prove cowardly and uncourageous, and to miss all the exhilaration of victorious effort and endurance. It is because John Bunyan knew this from actual personal experience, that he pictures his Pilgrim making the right choice:—"Christian now went to the spring, and drank thereof to refresh himself, and then began to go up the Hill, saying:

> "This Hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
> The difficulty will not me offend;
> For I perceive the way to life lies here:
> Come, pluck up, Heart, let's neither faint nor fear;
> Better, tho' difficult, the right way to go,
> Than wrong, though easy, where the end is wo."

In that spirit he begins the climb, and though he speedily encounters such obstacles that he has to clamber on his hands and knees, "because of the steepness of the place," he has struck the right path. Not so, however, two

other wayfarers, who perceiving the seemingly easier by-paths, avoided the Hill difficulty only to find that Danger and Destruction had been chosen instead of the true narrow path.

We who all have our pilgrimage to make are continually compelled to make our choice. There are some who say that to-day, as compared with earlier days, there is a growing love of ease. Young people, they say, want to see the crooked made straight and the rough places plain. If this is due to their concern for other folk, it is an admirable characteristic; but if it is because they fear for themselves the Hill Difficulty then truly they lack the qualities which make for the fulfilment of life and the satisfaction of life's imperative needs. Only by the straining of every nerve and the application of all our energy can we scale the heights where our life is hid with Christ in God. By the Hill Difficulty do we finally fit ourselves for the Delectable mountains.

Home Travels.

Although the desire to travel to distant lands is common to most persons there are many who for various reasons cannot realise their desire. But, fortunately, they may share in the delights of travel without experiencing any of its incidental inconveniences. Comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair at home, they may take part in a conducted tour and under sympathetic guidance visit some celebrated centre or cover some delightful stretch of territory. Writers abound who have the light descriptive touch and can make the rough places plain for the home traveller so that the scenes live again in their pages and the reader finds himself the happy traveller of his desires and dreams. Who, for example, can forget "An Inland Voyage," when with Robert Louis Stevenson for his guide he traversed lovely parts of Belgium and France? Or, again, could any land journey be more delectable than that planned for him by the same author in his "Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes"? Even the donkey itself, the gentle Modestine, imparted pleasure and gave reality to the bond of comradeship cemented in the happy wanderings. It may be that when the reader has himself covered the travel route described, his appreciation is greater and his participation more thoroughgoing. So it seemed at least to the present writer when he found two interesting records of travel dealing with the Rivers Rhine and Danube. But even to those not familiar with the beautiful and varied scenery along those rivers the travellers' descriptions would appeal. In two successive years a small company of young Englishmen purchased a boat, called the "Water Lily," and in it covered an extensive mileage on the Rhine and Danube. Their experiences are delightfully told, the characteristics of country and inhabitant lightly dwelt upon. No better introduction to strange scenes could be imagined than that provided by "The Log of the Water Lily," and "The Water Lily upon the Danube," the two travel books which formed the sequels of the two years' holidays. But it is of interest to note that the crew of the "Water Lily" gave an example which was followed with zest and delight by readers of their exploits. A few days ago the writer of this article had the good luck to obtain a copy of "Our Cruise in the Undine: The Journal of an English Pair-oar Expedition through France, Baden, Rhenish Bavaria, Prussia and Belgium," by "The Captain." Rivers which figured largely in the war, are their happy hunting ground. Starting with the Seine, they pass in turn along the rivers Yonne, Saone, Rhone, thence by the canal connecting the latter with the Rhine, and finally reach Belgium. They journey through the most beautifully varied country, extensive rich plains with the Vosges and Jura Mountains as their background; they touch historic places with ancient castles and chateaus doing sentinel for centuries, and incidentally establish happy human intercourse with a variety of interested natives. Although the record of their voyagings was written as long ago as 1854 it has still power to delight

persons who except at second-hand, know not the scenes of their pleasant experiences.

But why confine our travels to Europe! Given the necessary interest and sympathy there is no limit to our travels, even though we never leave home. Recently, for example, a famous book, "Arabia Deserta"—has appeared in a new edition and has gained fresh readers for its fascinating pages. The author, Charles Montagu Doughty, tells of his two years' life and wanderings among the Bedouins in Arabia. So clear are his impressions, so graphic and faithful his descriptions, that the book is amongst the greatest works of its kind in the English language. Thousands, to whom the "Far East" was but a descriptive phrase, have travelled under the author's skilful leadership into the very heart of Arabian scenes and experiences. He was one of the born travellers, adaptable and observant, who without losing their own individuality yet sink into the character of a new environment as the bird or beast in its habitat puts on its protective colouring. In the recently published edition of his great travel book, the author introduces himself thus: "Having spent the best part of ten years of early manhood sojourning in succession in most of the Continental countries, and lastly in Syria, and having wandered through the length and breadth of Palestine, I reached Egypt and Sinai; where with Bedouin guides, I wandered on, through the most of that vast mountainous labyrinthine solitude of rainless valleys; with their sand-wind burnished rocks and stones and in some of them, often strangely scribbled Nabatean cliff-inscriptions (the names, the saws and salutations of ancient wayfarers). From thence gone up to Edom, I visited Petra; and at Maan settlement which is a few miles beyond, heard of other Petra-like sculptured cliff- monuments, bearing many inscriptions, at Medain Salih. (That was a water-station of the Damascus yearly pilgrims' caravan, in their long desert way to Medina and Mecca), lying some few days' journey southward from Maan but difficult to be reached, at other times, for danger of the wild Bedouins."

Such is the nature of his long adventurous journeys, and yet we, without danger or physical fatigue, can travel in his footsteps, seeing the wonders of places mentioned in the Bible or brought into prominence during the late war. The spirit of the writer may be seen in these words: "In the adventure thus begun, there passed over me, amongst the thinly-scattered, generally hostile and suspicious inhabitants of that Land of wilderness, nearly two long and partly weary years; but not without happy turns, in the not seldom finding, as I went forth, of human fellowship amongst Arabians and even of some very true and helpful friendships; which, from this long distance of years, I vividly recall and shall, whilst life lasts, continue to esteem with grateful mind. The haps that befel me are narrated in these volumes; wherein I have set down that which I saw with my eyes, and heard with my ears, and thought in my heart; neither more or less." And so, in nearly twelve hundred pages of description this Prince of Travellers embodies his hardly-won wealth of Eastern lore, in order that we who know nothing of the glaring sun or arid wastes of far-distant lands may amid the comforts of home follow his clearly-traced wanderings and adventures.

WINDOWS.

But when the shadows of the night begin,
And sifted sunlight falls no more on me,
May I have learned to light my lamp within;
So that the passing world may look and see
Still the same radiance, though with paler hue,
Of the sweet lives that help men to live true.

—Abbie Farwell Brown.

Lesson Notes.

[In accordance with the Scheme for 1921, prepared by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.]

Aug. 7th. The entry into Jerusalem. Read Mark xi. 1-18. Key text, Mark xi. 9.

1. "*The Lord hath need of him.*" We must remember that this was the most significant moment in the life of Jesus. He was about to enter the great and powerful city of Jerusalem in order to win the people to his side as the Messiah of a new and eternal kingdom. What a fuss some folk would have made! They would have needed all sorts of wonderful clothes and decorations, brass bands, and I know not what, in order to make what they would feel to be a fitting entrance. The *one* thing our Lord said he needed was a humble colt. Why? Because no man is fit for the kingdom, is worthy to be called a child of God, unless he is willing to humble himself, trusting rather in God's strength than man's. He needed only the lowliest help; he depended on the appeal of humility rather than on making what we may call a great splash. If only we would go the same way to work, we should soon have a Christian world. Instead of feeling that in order to make a proper entrance among folk, we needed to make money, or put on fine clothes and grand airs, we could feel that the one necessary thing was a tender and loving heart that was ready to perform even the lowliest service so that it was helpful, we should soon convince them that the kingdom of God was at hand.

2. "*Hosanna.*" Our Lord's humble entrance appealed to what was best in man's nature, and he was rapturously greeted as the Messiah. The cutting down of the palm branches to strew in his way gives its name to Palm Sunday. Whether the multitudes really knew it or not, they could not have described Jesus' purpose better than when they cried, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," for Jesus did not come in order to gain some earthly advantage for himself, or merely to enrich his followers. He came to try to turn men's hearts to God, so that God's kingdom might be established. Oftentimes he who most truly comes in the name of the Lord is misunderstood and rejected, as within a few days Jesus was. It is for us to be always ready to welcome even the humblest and most arduous opportunities of showing our love to God. To every one who prompts us to better things we should cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

3. *The fig tree.* This apparently difficult incident is explained thus by commentators: "A fig tree in *leaf*, unless its appearance was a deception, should have *fruit* on it—green fruit, at least. But this tree had nothing but leaves. It belied its profession, and this was its condemnation." In the same way it is no use our making a good show, either in position, clothes, wealth, or education, unless we bear some good fruit.

4. *The plotting against Jesus.* He especially offended the priests, because in righteous indignation he had actively protested against business and trading inside the temple. He knew how unsafe he was, because, as we learn from v. 19, "every evening he went forth out of the city." His time was not yet come, and until then he spent the nights with friends outside.

Aug. 14th. The Parable of the Vineyard. Read Mark xii. 1-12. Key text, Mark xii. 10.

General Note. In this parable the vineyard is the earth; the husbandmen are the dwellers upon earth. We are not responsible for the fruitfulness of the earth. That is God's generous gift to us. Our powers are limited to cultivating the earth and developing all its wealth. God, however, expects the fruits of the earth to come back to Him. This does not mean that there

is nothing for us. The fruits that God requires are not the food, etc., necessary for maintaining life, but the noble, willing, and purified hearts of all mankind. We really own nothing by right. He who just takes everything for his own selfish enjoyment, making no return of piety, generosity, and love, is most dishonest. We must regard ourselves as God's stewards, working in *His* vineyard (not our own), and making a return of noble living for the wages he pays us in the shape of earthly food and comfort.

1. *He sent a servant.* These servants are the prophets, who came to call men to a better and more unselfish life, and thus return to God worthy fruits of the vineyard. But by refusing to heed the prophets, even shamefully ill-treating and killing them, they denied their proper debt to God.

2. *"They will reverence my son."* The strength of God's love for men is shown by the constant efforts He makes to win them to Him. He even sent of His very best, hoping thus to win them to a proper state of mind. But the son fared worst of all. The Son is Jesus Christ, the greatest and best messenger ever sent to men, and in this parable our Lord is shown as foretelling his own fate.

3. *The fate of the husbandmen.* They will lose everything. Above all they will lose the great opportunity of doing God's work, and thus all the earthly treasure thay have laid up will count for nothing. Those who do not make good use of the treasures God gives, fail to be His children, and lose their place in the eternal kingdom.

4. *"The stone which the builders rejected."* This saying shows that one reason why men did not heed Jesus was because he appeared "in humblest guise." But this humble carpenter was to be the chief corner stone in the heavenly kingdom of loving souls.

5. *They feared the multitude.* At this stage the great mass of the people were still loyal to Jesus; but his enemies cunningly spread false reports, etc., until, as we shall see, the people at last turned against Him.

Aug. 21st. Love and Envy. Read Mark xiv. 1-11. Key text, I. John iv. 16.

1. *Plots against Jesus.* His enemies did not want to act during the great Passover Feast, because there would be crowds of folk present in Jerusalem from Galilee, who would be supporters of Jesus. But the action of Judas made them seize him earlier than they intended.

2. *Love and Envy.* At first sight the arguments of those who disapproved of the woman's generous act of devotion seem to contain something of love. They said that the three hundred pence (worth about £40 of our money), which the ointment cost could have been given to the poor. But the point is, that they did not say this because they loved the poor, but because they were envious at such generous devotion being shown to the humble Jesus of Nazareth. Love alone gives value to our deeds. Many folk do what is right from a wrong motive, and then expect to be thought righteous. A halfpenny given in love is a nobler gift than £1,000 given merely to make a show, or even to spite someone else. Jesus' enemies would have given the 300 pence to the poor, not from love for them, but to spite Jesus and keep him from being honoured. Whereas the woman never stopped to think how much the ointment cost. It was the best she could get, because she really loved Jesus; and we always want to give the best we can to those we really love. If we really loved God and goodness, we should never think about any trouble or expense entailed in doing His will. We should just do it, no matter how great the cost, no matter how great the sacrifice.

3. *Verse* 3. *"A woman."* According to Luke, this woman was a *"sinful woman."* If so, how much greater the discredit for Jesus' enemies, who prided themselves on being "righteous," and yet were full of the sin of envy.

4. *"Ye have the poor always with you."* The meaning of this is quite simple. The woman had only this one opportunity of performing a gracious act of service for Jesus, and she was wise in making the most of it. Whereas, if those murmurers really cared for the poor, there was ample opportunity of doing something for them when Jesus was gone. The point is, always do good when you can; never excuse yourself for not doing the good you can on the ground that you might be able to do a greater good some other time.

For elder scholars.—Some folk, usually to serve their own ends, have employed the words, "Ye have the poor always with you" as meaning that Jesus approved of there always being a class of poverty-stricken people in the world, and therefore they have never attempted to tackle the problem of poverty. As if Jesus could have approved of the continual existence of poverty, when the essence of his teaching is helpfulness. Whether we succeed or not, we are bound to try to help those who are worse off than ourselves, and eventually to do away with poverty.

Aug. 28th. The Last Supper. Read Mark xiv. 12-31. Key Text, Luke xxii. 19.

1. *The Feast of the Passover.* This was the greatest religious festival of the year for the Jews, when they celebrated God's mercy in passing over their houses when every Egyptian household was smitten with the death of the firstborn, on the eve of the departure of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt. Jesus, like all other Jews, kept this festival, but he gave it a new meaning. It became for him and his followers the last supper before they all met together again in the kingdom of God. *For elder scholars.* Note that Mark, Matthew, and Luke all place the last supper on the day of the Passover. John, however, places it on the day *before* the Passover, and thus the Crucifixion falls on the actual feast day, Jesus being the new Paschal lamb. This difference, however, does not matter much. Jesus is just as much the Lamb of God, whether he died on the Passover or the day after.

2. *Dark forebodings.* Jesus astonished and dismayed the disciples by laying bare the treacherous heart of one of them, namely, Judas.

3. *The Sacrament of the Last Supper.* Jesus felt that death was very near. He had challenged the great religious leaders by setting before men a new and more spiritual idea of the Messiahship. He knew that before the kingdom of God could come the greatest sacrifices would have to be made, even unto death. Therefore he seized the opportunity of the Passover Supper to give his disciples a sign that would bind them eternally together in him. His body and blood were to be sacrificed. Therefore let them regard the bread and wine as his body and blood, and so take part with him in his sacrifice. The fact is, that all we eat and drink comes from the sacrifice of the body and blood of someone—usually our parents. They spend themselves that we may live. But the food and drink Jesus stands for is the bread and water of life eternal. Luke (xxii. 19) strikes the right note when he gives us Jesus' words: "This do in remembrance of me." We keep the Last Supper so as to remember Jesus, and remembering Jesus we become like him, and so make ourselves worthy of eternal life. *For elder scholars.* Stress the fact that we do not keep the Last Supper because we are already good, but that we may be strengthened in goodness through remembering the goodness of Jesus, and so partaking of his spirit. E.H.P.

COMMON GIFTS.

For gentle courtesies of life,
For dear communion, friend with friend,
Those hours with sacred meaning rife
When love looks to no earthly end.

We yield the praise for sovereign power
That steadies us o'er gulfs of pain;
Shall we forget thee in the hour
That leads us back to strength again?

Let not our gratitude delay
Till good withheld constrains the prayer,
Give clearer vision, that we may
Hold common blessings as if rare.

A New Life of Christ.

By a "New Theologian."

Some months ago the visit of the Rev. R. J. Campbell to Belfast brought again into notice, so far as many persons were concerned, a preacher whose spoken and written words have reached thousands of people. He has now joined the band of Christian divines who have attempted the most difficult of tasks, viz., to write a Life of Christ. In the preface of his recently-published work he tells us that it represents the execution of a task, undertaken some years ago, "which should meet the wants of the ordinary churchgoer in regard to the devout study of the subject without ignoring the accepted conclusions of scholarship." The materials accumulated proving too ample for the allowed space, the author has embodied in a little over three hundred and fifty pages, his conception of Christ and his work. We propose, in this and a subsequent article, to estimate the measure of success attending his task.

It may be said that of the making of Lives of Christ there is no end and no final satisfaction. Materials for an adequate biography do not exist as we demand them to-day. So sparse are the records, especially as regards some parts of the life of Jesus, that room is left for the conjectures and subjective idiosyncracies of the biographer. On the one hand, the modern writer may confine himself to the New Testament, and out of the meagre materials there, draw forth his own portrait of Christ. In that case, adding nothing to what we know, he gives us an impressionist sketch. Such was the character of most of the earlier so-called Lives of Christ.

But there is a second course open to the modern biographer. He may reconstruct the environment in which the New Testament and its personages are found. Availing himself of the researches of many scholars he may supplement the gospel records with information concerning life in Palestine and the surrounding countries in touch with it. We may, for example, recall a later case, that of Shakespeare. The actual details of biography are all too few. But, not content therewith, the Shakespearean scholar has pored over the annals which help to recover and reveal the life of Stratford-on-Avon when Shakespeare grew up. We know the nature of the home life in the house of its yeomen, the school books which its young people studied, the general preparation for life which was provi ded in the England of the sixteenth century. The result is that this general background, together with the particular personal facts we have of Shakespeare himself, constitute our materials and give us our conception of Shakespeare.

Precisely in the same way do we proceed when we would know Jesus. Sir William Ramsay with his book, "The Education of Jesus," seeks to make instructive and articulate the silent years of the Lord's life by portrayal of his environment at Nazareth. Other scholars make real for us the synagogue school and services, thus enabling us to enter into the contemporary conditions which Jesus must have known and shared. And even the circumstances of Palestinian life and thought before and after the days of Jesus yield their valuable contribution. All these sources play their part in the portrayal of the true earthly life, and any biography which ignores them is worthless.

Now Mr. Campbell definitely ranges himself with the second and more satisfactory school of biographers. He continually avails himself of, and makes reference to, the work of the scholar. Naturally, he does not enter into discussed questions, but makes use of assured results. He is more speculative, however, in his Introductory section (Chapter I.) and he leaves himself open to misconstruction when he states: "We cannot study the life of Jesus as we should study that of Mahomet or John Wesley: the subject before us is of another kind, and that is why so much of the criticism of Christian origins has gone wide of the mark. The Church of Jesus is as unique as

the being to whom it owes its origin and claims to owe its present existence. It is not like any other society and no other can be placed in comparison with it." The point of the writer appears to be this: The Church of Christ authenticates the person of Christ. Both are unique in character and marked off from other organisations and personages. It seems to us that the claim is either unsound or at least premature in character. Criticism takes nothing for granted. Both the Christian Church and its founder appear as phenomena of history, and we must proceed with their investigation precisely as we would with the investigation of Mahomet or John Wesley and the organisations they founded. However much we may be driven later to claim for Christianity and the Christ a unique character they must at first satisfy the test applied to all human origins. That we cannot separate the founder and the church, that in the light of the latter we learn to know better the former is a sound argument and one whose force we admit. Despite its misuse and actual abuse in some quarters there is truth in the theory of development. The Church of Christ, as we know it in history, does, as it seems to us, demand a cause equal to the fact, and that we find in the Jesus of history. So far as Mr. Campbell means that we agree, but his statement is misleading, as we have quoted it. Even to give rise to the suspicion that we exempt Christ and his Church from the ordinary canons of historical criticism is to do both a disservice; since both satisfy the test and supply the corrective to the vague subjectiveness of the special pleader for this or that picture of Christ. When once we leave the safe and common foundation of historical fact spiritual fancy and phantasy can play their part as heretofore.

The treatment of this, in our opinion, important principle has delayed our entry upon Mr. Campbell's actual territory. We propose next time to indicate the nature of his journey and the character of his conclusions.

(To be continued.)

Dante and the "Divine Comedy"

Introductory.

On September 14th, 1921, there will be celebrated the world over the six hundredth anniversary of the death of the great Italian poet, Dante. That his own people should think highly of, and recall with gratitude, the life and work of "that singular splendour of the Italian race," as his first biographer designated him, occasions no surprise. But how is it that in all lands where great literature is appreciated and profound thought on spiritual verities appeals, mention will be made of his doings? To that question we propose to furnish an answer.

Our present purpose is to give a few biographical details, and then, in a later series of articles, to deal with his imperishable work, the Divine Comedy. In May, 1265, and in the city of Florence, he was born, his father being a lawyer. His baptismal name appears to have been Durante, which was afterwards shortened to the familiar form Dante. The meaning of the latter word is "The Giver," and few men have lived who gave greater gifts to the world than are represented in his literary works. Fortunately, he has left particulars of his own experiences, and the most important is his early meeting with Beatrice, who exercised a profound influence upon him and is immortalised in his greatest work. His chance meeting with her in May, 1274, stands out as one of the determining factors in his career. It has been commemorated not only in his writings but made more familiar in the works of great painters.

In youth and early manhood he was involved in the bitter conflicts of the two great parties, the Guelphs of Florence, and the Ghibellines. To the more moderate section of the former, the White Guelphs, he gave in his adherence, and in 1289, fought in the Battle of Campaldino, where the Guelphs or

Whites defeated the Ghibellines or Blacks. It is about this time that his name and profession are entered in the register of a city guild in Florence, the entry being " Dante d'Aldighieri, poeta." But the times demanded public services, and these he unstintingly gave, passing through various minor offices until he reached distinction as one of the six priors of Florence. This post, however, he held for only two months.

Various missions were entrusted to him, and in 1301, he was sent on an embassy to Rome. The return journey was never made by him, nor did he ever re-visit his native city. The reason was that the Blacks came decisively into the ascendant, and in January, 1302, Dante and others were banished. Later in the same year an edict was published condemning the exiles to be burnt alive if ever caught—a sentence repeated in 1311 and 1315. Accordingly, Dante was compelled to live a wandering life, sojourning in different Italian cities, and also, according to some authorities, residing for a time in Paris and Oxford. Obscurity rests upon this part of his exile, but we are certain of his residence later in Romagna and in Ravenna, for in the latter he passed many months until his death on September 14th, 1321. There he was buried with much pomp, indicating that already he was highly esteemed for his character as well as for his work's sake.

Among the many celebrations, perhaps that of the city of Ravenna will prove the most remarkable. The whole of the year 1921, it was decided months ago, should serve as a special period for celebrating the fame of Dante and his association with Ravenna.

Few poets, ancient and modern, are better known than Dante, and in his case we have what we lack in some more recent examples, the exact representation of his features. This we owe to the fact that a cast was taken of his face after death. Thus we are more certain of his actual appearance than we are of British poets like Shakespeare and Milton.

In the six centuries which have passed since his death, the interest in the poet and his writings has grown from more to more. No body of literature, with the exception of the Bible, has produced such a vast collection of commentaries. The " Divine Comedy " has been translated likewise into every chief tongue, and the greatest of writers have fallen under the poet'sspell and sought to interpret his mind and art. Of his place and influence in literature it would be impossible to say too much. While the " Divine Comedy " made the Italian language, it also through the latter exercised a profound influence upon the literatures of other peoples. Chaucer, the first great English poet, owed not a little of his art to his apprenticeship to the Italian writers, Dante and Boccaccio. But it is from the religious rather than from the purely literary point of view that we propose to treat him and his greatest work.

(To be continued.)

MEMORIES.

Dear for your sake the fireside where we sit
  Watching these sad bright pictures come and go,
That waning years are with your memory lit,
  Is now the lonely comfort that we know.

Is it all memory? Lo, these forest-boughs
  Burst on the hearth into fresh leaf and bloom;
Waft a vague, far-off sweetness through the house,
  And give close walls the hillside's breathing-room.

Unseen, you bring to us, who love and wait,
  Freshness of heavenly hills, immortal air!
No flood can quench your hearts' warmth, or abate:
  Ye are our galdness, here and everywhere.

The Wideness of God's Mercy.

In a hymn which appears in many modern collections of hymns there occur the familiar lines :

> " There's a wideness in God's mercy
> Like the wideness of the sea."

It is a sublime thought, suggestively expressed. For the comfort and the assurance thus implied men have longed in every age. Yet how often has human opinion set bounds to the thought of divine love and tried to belittle its amplitude. Theologians, early and late, have entered into the counsels of the Almighty and All-loving so completely that they have been able to say who were accepted or rejected of Him. Never has opinion been so explicit and so certain as in its pronouncement upon the saved and the lost. Dogmatism had no doubts even when Christ himself hesitated to pronounce judgment and left much to God himself, with confidence in his goodness and mercy. One of the earliest of Christian teachers unhesitatingly distinguished sharply between the sheep and the goats, and knew the characteristic of each with entire satisfaction and assurance. This point of view has been well put by a modern poet, Matthew Arnold :—

> " ' He saves the sheep, the goats He doth not save.'
> So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
> Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried
> ' Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
> Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal wave.'
> So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sighed,
> The infant Church ! of love she felt the tide
> Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.
> And then she smiled ; and in the Catacombs
> With eye suffused but heart inspired true,
> On those walls subterranean, where she hid
> Her head, 'mid ignominy, death and tombs,
> She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew,
> And on His shoulders, not a lamb, a kid."

What a much-needed corrective of Tertullian's un-Christian sentence! The persecuted followers of Jesus, fleeing for refuge from human hatred to the Catacombs, the Roman burial places, possess the nobler and truer thought of the matter. Among the representations of their Lord and Master which they carved upon the walls of their underground refuge was one discovered answering to the poet's description. It portrayed Jesus as the Good Shepherd, but instead of carrying on his shoulders a lamb, the customary figure, he in this instance bore a kid. God saves not only the sheep, but also the goats—that is the early Christian reply to Tertullian's narrow view of God's dealings with men.

Yet again and again the larger thought is lost sight of and " the measures of man's mind " set barriers to the wideness of the sea, making some narrow creek the miserable substitute of the all-comprehending and all-compassing love. Thus the elect alone may partake of the divine mercy, the mass of the reprobate experience his justice.

How to reconcile justice and mercy seems to be the crux of the matter, in many theological works. But the appeal to the best human experience frequently proves more effective than all the pleadings of logic. It is only when men are unresponsive to the best promptings of human affection that they so inadequately conceive of the scope of God's love. Here, again, the poet comes to our aid with his suggestive illustration. Whittier tells us in one of his poems how a preacher had set forth in his sermon the thought of God's dire punishment of the sinner. After service, when walking with his little girl in the garden, she questioned him concerning his dreadful doctrine, letting it plainly appear that in this matter his heart was better than his head, as shown by the unstinted character of his parental affection. So effective was the daughter's little sermon and its appeal, that henceforth the preacher's hearers heard a new note struck in the Sunday discourse. No longer did he speak of the divine wrath and condemnation but human hearts heard and re-

ceived the glad tidings of God's love and compassion. This change of emphasis is so beautifully brought out in the poem that we are impelled to allow the poet to describe it in his own best way :

" Bowing his head he pondered
The words of the little one ;
Had he erred in his life-long teaching ?
Had he wrong to his Master done ?

To what grim and dreadful idol
Had he lent the holiest name ?
Did his own heart, loving and human,
The God of his worship shame ?

And, lo ! from the bloom and greenness,
From the tender skies above,
And the face of his little daughter,
He read a lesson of love.

No more as the cloudy terror
Of Sinai's mount of law,
But as Christ in the Syrian lilies
The vision of God he saw.

And, as when, in the clefts of Horeb,
Of old was His presence known,
The dread Ineffable Glory
Was Infinite Goodness alone.

Thereafter his hearers noted
In his prayers a tenderer strain,
And never the Gospel of hatred
Burned on his lips again.

And the scoffing tongue was prayerful,
And the blinded eyes found sight,
And hearts, as flint aforetime,
Grew soft in his warmth and light."

Those who think that human nature is so hard that it can only respond to the menace of fear, find their answer in the closing words of Whittier's poem. The Quaker poet believes, and we are at one with him in that belief, that the gospel of the divine Love is more potent in its appeal, and certainly more consonant with Christ's word and work, than the horrible conception of a God whose justice afflicts and tortures. The world needs the all-pervading and all-conquering power of love. It is for us to proclaim it with a new passion and a greater insistence.

Reports.

Unity Guild.—Two pic-nics in connection with the Unity Guild have been held this season. The first took place on Saturday, 21st May, to "The Knockagh," and being favoured with fine weather a very enjoyable afternoon was spent. The second was held on Saturday, June 18th, when the party went to Ballylesson, where Dr. Orr kindly provided accommodation. After tea, Dr. and Miss Orr took us through their delightful garden, where a pleasant hour was spent. Our thanks are due to Dr. and Miss Orr for their great kindness in providing us with accommodation, and also for the abundant supply of cake, stewed fruit, etc., which they had thoughtfully provided for us. The return journey was made by the upper regions of the Lagan.

Belfast—First Church.—Following upon the decision of the General Committee to undertake the renovation and re-decoration of the interior of the church building during the month of August, it will be necessary to hold the services then in the Central Hall. The vestibule of the church will not be dealt with by the decorators until the War Memorial designed by Miss Praeger has been completed and placed in the position decided upon at the Congregational Meeting some time ago. There will be no alteration in the time of the services, viz.: morning service at 11-30 and evening at 7 o'clock. It is hoped that the change of place during August will not affect the attendances, but that members and friends will make it a matter of duty to be present if at all possible.

Belfast : York Street.—The annual Sunday School Outing took place on Saturday, June 25th, when a party of 80 travelled by special car to the Malone Terminus and thence on foot to "The Dub." Notwithstanding the excessive heat, and the fairly long walk, our young people adapted themselves well to restricted conditions and enjoyed the trip ; while the older members of the party were well content with the shade and an excellent cup of tea, also the opportunity of comparing notes, arriving home at York Street about

9 o'clock. The general verdict seemed to be that this was one of our most successful outings. On the following day, Sunday, June 26th, we had three special floral services. At the morning and evening worship a special form of praise and prayer (published by Essex Hall) was taken. Much credit is due to the choir for the exceptionally fine rendering of the anthems, and the general standard of the services. At the afternoon service an address was given by Mr. D. Atha, one of the oldest scoutmasters in the city, whose practical, pointed remarks were much appreciated by the congregation. With the object of raising sufficient money to pay off an outstanding debt, and cover an overdraft at the Bank, we have arrangements well in hand for a sale of work to be held on Friday and Saturday, October 14th and 15th. It is hoped in this way to place the church on a sound financial basis, and ensure as far as possible the continued life and well-being of the congregation. It will probably interest many of our friends to learn that we are forming a local chapter of the Laymen's League at York Street, and that upwards of 30 men have intimated their wish to join this excellent movement.

Downpatrick.—The pic-nic and dance at Hollymount on July 7th, arranged in aid of the First Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, was a great success. A field was kindly lent by Mrs. M'Endoo, who also rendered valuable assistance in catering for the large gathering of between 350 to 400 friends. The Hollymount pipe band added considerable liveliness to the outing, and is to be congratulated on its work after only about a year's training. There was a strong committee of about a dozen ladies and gentlemen, who worked untiringly, and special mention ought to be made of the energetic services of Mrs. Richey, Mrs. T. Hutton, Misses A. Moffett and M'Endoo, and Messrs. John Nesbitt, J. Richey, R. and W. Neill, A. Moffett, and M'Endoo. Mr. John Ferris did yeoman service as gatekeeper, and Mrs. Martin was, as ever, of great assistance. It is hoped that this out-door gathering will realise £20 towards the Bazaar to be held in December.

Killinchy.—Sunday School Anniversary and Flower Services were held on Sunday, June 19th. Hymns taken from the new School Hymnal recently published by the S.S. Association were selected and practised for the occasion by the School Children and the Choir, and were rendered with spirit. The anthem, "Incline thine ear," by the Choir was well sung. The services, conducted by the Minister, were very successful, and the total collections were adequate for the occasion. The annual School Walking took place on the following Saturday, June 25th, when teachers and scholars assembled in the Lecture Hall for refreshments. Due justice having been done to the good things, the school formed into procession and "walked" to the Misses Watson's lawn, kindly lent for the occasion, where an enjoyable evening was spent. The weather was so delightfully fine and the sun so hot that there was little inclination to indulge in games till late in the evening when it was cooler. A large crowd then gathered and a very enjoyable evening was spent.

Larne.—This year, on 5th July, instead of going North to Garron Tower or South to Magheramorne, or across country, as we have done once or twice to Templepatrick, our home Sunday School scholars enjoyed a delightful garden party in their own grounds, now in all their bloom and leafiness. Our Kilwaughter scholars contented themselves with joining on the previous Saturday a huge gathering of Good Templars, and the pupils and teachers of two other Sunday Schools in the neighbourhood. In due time on the afternoon mentioned the usual refreshments were supplied must plentifully and repeated on a gentler scale immediately before separation. Needless to say, that although three professional teachers who give their services on Sundays, were away on holidays, Mr. Wright, the Superintendent, with the assistance of Miss Bailie, Miss M'Kee, Miss Steele, Miss Crawford, and Miss Drummond, most energetically and successfully entertained a large and happy party of young folk.

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